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BRIEF MENTION

"The Background of the 'Battle of the Books,'" by Richard F. Jones (Reprinted from *Washington University Studies*, Vol. VII, Humanistic Series, No. 2, pp. 97-162, 1920). The title designates Swift's satire (1697-1698), and Dr. Jones aims to show that it was the outgrowth, a final expression of a century-long controversy in England (with only incidental reflections of French thought),—a controversy too that was "philosophic and scientific rather than literary and artistic in nature." The simple terms battle, war, quarrel, etc. are available for this comprehensive controversy, which is presented as having passed thru successive stages "where a definite protagonist on either side appears." Three stages are distinguished: (1) the "Controversy over the Decay of Nature with Goodman and Hakewill as opposing heroes"; (2) the "Controversy over the Royal Society with Stubbe opposed to Sprat and Glanville"; and (3) the "Controversy over Ancient and Modern Learning wherein Temple and Boyle face Wotton and Bentley."

Bacon was "largely responsible for creating the war, giving it "the philosophic cast." Had he given it also the literary cast, "the nature of the quarrel in England would have been quite different." As it was, the first definite contest was waged over the paradox (announced by Bacon) that "we are the ancients, the ancients the moderns" (see *MLN.* xxxvi, 257, and Guthkelch, p. 259). This imposed old age and decrepitude on mankind and indeed on all nature. This argument was sustained by Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, in *The Fall of Man or the Corruption of Nature proved by Natural Reason*, 1616. The error was rebuked in *An Apologie, . . . consisting in an Examination and Censure of the Common Errour touching Nature's Perpetual and Universal Decay*, 1627 (reaching a third edition in 1635), by George Hakewill, Arch Deacon of Surrey. Hakewill represents the high point of the controversy in its comprehensive form. "In no other country or time did the conflict embrace so wide a field." In a book of four parts the stability of the powers of nature and of the mind of man—imagination, judgment, and memory—are seriously and elaborately defended against the argument of gradual deterioration. In the comparison of the ages with respect to "Arts and Wits," the three modern inventions of "Printing, Gunnes, and the Mariner's Compasse" are handled in that specific manner which was effectively adopted by subsequent advocates. Influenced by Bacon the earnest Arch Deacon's defence is almost exclusively philosophic and scientific. With a mind not literary he, however, for "completeness of design" has a discussion of Greek and Latin poetry, "brief and faint-hearted," and something in the way of a comparative estimate of English poets. In itself unimportant enough, this feature has significance in the history of the conflict. Dr. Jones concludes this chapter with a brief notice of Henry Rey-

nold's *Mythomystes*, "a unique and isolated skirmish in the quarrel." It is a lamentation over a senile world and the inferiority of the modern poets, supported by less usual details.

The conflict of the Baconian system with the old syllogistic philosophy assumed definite outlines that stimulated the founding of the Royal Society. This aspect of the subject is reviewed in the second chapter. Sprat, in his *History*, which Dr. Jones reports with fine discernment, supplies the principal events, and as "the Huxley of the age" (p. 119) argues the claims of the new method with a zeal for correcting traditional notions and with a comprehensive view of educational elements whether old or new. "The method is Sprat's slogan," not the accomplishment as with Hake-will. "Like Bacon he stakes his all on the results that will be obtained. . . . The controversy is one between tradition and progress," in matters philosophic and scientific. There is some incidental indication of Sprat's judgment of what the moderns must overcome to equal the ancients in literature, and his passage on the desired effect of scientific accuracy and clearness on literary style is, of course, especially noteworthy. He also anticipates Wordsworth in declaring that the advance of science will enrich the poet's storehouse of symbols and figures of expression, thru "an understanding of new virtues and qualities of things." In the sketch of the controversy between the defenders and the opponents of the Royal Society many a detail fits the present day. For example, Stubbe "upholds the cultural education based on the classics against the material and mechanical education derived from experiment." There is, moreover, the development of a side-play by that class of philosophically superficial minds to which the minuteness of scientific experiments becomes merely a chartered theme for cheap ridicule. As representing this class are mentioned Shadwell, Butler, D'Urfey, and Mrs. Manly (p. 130).

"The Critical Dilemma" (the title of the third chapter) describes the peculiar attitude of English critics when comparing modern with ancient literature. It was a shifting attitude, just suited to Dryden the chief of the critics. Dr. Jones offers a plausible formula of the unsettled state of critical judgments, "of the chaotic condition of seventeenth-century criticism." He believes "that the critics embraced a critical creed that did not justify their taste" (p. 136). The critical creed of French neo-classicism was accepted and verified intellectually, but clashed with emotional and artistic convictions as to native literature. "In this state of affairs, it was hardly possible for a controversy over the respective merits of the ancients and moderns to arise. Their allegiance to the rules prevented critics from asserting the superiority of their own poets, though their instinctive liking for their own literature might be great." Besides, the English language as an adequate medium of great art was held in doubtful estimation. But the

nationalistic feeling gained in assertiveness thru an estimation of French classicism. "English substance" won "against French thinness." Dennis finds "greater geniuses in England than in France," and these are not fettered by codifications of critical principles. Liberal in acknowledging the excellence of the traditional forms, they are also free in experimentation, sustained by the response of the national consciousness.

Out of the tolerance, wavering, and national indifference to a specific quarrel there issues in the last decade of the century (the seventeenth) a definite advocacy of the moderns against the ancients in literature. The defender is Charles Gildon "a true son of Dryden, from whom he derived most of the arguments he advanced against the strict application of Aristotle's rules to the English drama," and a "strong nationalistic tone." He "speaks of a 'present controversy,' but he had read neither Fontenelle nor Perrault." He was inspired by Dryden's arguments of 1668, and attacked Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age* of 1678, which preceded Perrault's poem by nine years. "Corneille and Rapin had "influenced Dryden and Rymer, and to that extent the controversy was imported from France." But Gildon's "inspiration came from English sources" and his activity would probably have been the same, "if Perrault had never written." Tho "he later completely reversed his position," Gildon is thus found to be "the only English critic of the seventeenth century that came out unreservedly for the moderns."

A statement like the following gives an indication of the coherent history of the philosophic and scientific controversy: "In Glanville the two streams flowing from Bacon and Hakewill unite, and from him the enlarged current flows to Wotton and the end of the quarrel" (p. 126). Starting with Swift's *Battle*, which marks that end, one may move up the stream by taking in inverse order the argument of Dr. Jones's last chapter. The thread of the controversy taken in that order is this, that the *Battle* was designed to support Temple's *Essay*, which in its turn was elicited by Burnet's *Sacred Theorie of the Earth* wherein the controversy over the Royal Society was renewed. This reduces Temple's reaction to Fontenelle's *Digression* to an incidental or merely contributory 'provocation.' By this elevation of Burnet above Fontenelle, Dr. Jones keeps his argument at a crucial point running true to the assumption that the quarrel was not imported from France. Temple turns away from Fontenelle and "refuses to discuss the poetical aspect of the controversy on the ground that poetry should be a subject in itself." His very title betrays his concern with 'learning,' and his treatment of 'knowledge' and 'progress in the search and discoveries of the vast region of truth and nature' is in the English manner, the manner of Hakewill, Sprat, and Burnet. "It was the revival of the attack on the new science, and had little to do with the quarrel in France, which was largely literary."

The controversy in its latest form was, of course, not unrelated to the quarrel conducted in France, that is not denied; but Dr. Jones contends that the foreign influence as it shows itself in Swift was a natural consequence of the native controversy having become less specifically philosophic and scientific and more literary thru the contentions of Wotton and Bentley. But to the end, as when "the Goddess of Criticism sheds her blessing on Gresham College," the method and the details of the English argument are traceable back to Hakewill. Altho Temple and Swift were by education and temperament unfitted to admit the claims of the new philosophy, they were too closely knit up with the English side of the controversy to depart from its traditional method and to adopt the specifically French method. Swift while at Oxford not only showed his lack of mathematical ability, but also acquired the institutional hatred of the scientific learning; and in this localized influence the spirit of his contention reaches back to Joseph Glanville who, in 1661, had conducted "a vigorous campaign against the scholastic philosophy dominant at Oxford" (p. 117).

Mr. Jones has made a valuable contribution to the wider and deeper view of the quarrel, which Macaulay misunderstood so completely as to characterize it "as childish, idle, and contemptible."

J. W. B.

Schwäbisches Wörterbuch, auf Grund der von A. v. Keller begonnenen Sammlungen und mit Unterstützung des Württembergischen Staates bearbeitet von HERMANN FISCHER. Fünfter Band. Tübingen, H. Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1920. iv pp., 1976 cols., 4to. The beginnings of the *Schwäbisches Wörterbuch* date back to the middle of the last century, when A. v. Keller began to register the grammatical and lexicographical peculiarities of his dialect, enlisting, at the same time, the aid and co-operation of other competent observers. After Keller's death in 1883 Hermann Fischer, son of the poet Johann Georg Fischer, took up the task. Preliminary to the *Wörterbuch*, his *Geographie der schwäbischen Mundart* was published in 1895. Six years later the first fascicle of the *Wörterbuch* left the press, and the appearance of the sixty-first instalment, in June, 1920, marked the completion of five stately quarto volumes. Soon afterwards a protracted illness befell Fischer, resulting in his death on October 30, just after he had entered upon his seventieth year. He was thus not to see the conclusion of his labors. In fact, in the preface to the first volume (1904) he had asked the question: "wer weiss ob am Schluss ich noch selber das Wort haben werde?" The sixth and final volume is being edited by Wilhelm Pfeleiderer, Fischer's principal assistant for a number of years.

It is impossible here to enter upon a detailed description of the

work. I may point out, however, that it is by no means limited to the spoken, or written, dialect in the usual sense of the word, altho, to be sure, the living language of the present is taken as the point of departure. Wieland, Schubart, Schiller, Uhland, Mörike, Hermann Kurz, and other authors of lesser note are cited wherever their writings furnish illustrations of specifically Suabian idioms. Furthermore, in addition to the literary monuments concerned, historical documents of every description were consulted, yielding dated evidence that is most valuable as a supplement to Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Take for example, the word *Aschermittwoch*: Grimm cites no early instances, Kluge assigns it to the sixteenth century, while Fischer furnishes a series of dated instances beginning with the fifteenth, whilst forms such as *die äscherig Mitwoch* are traced back to the middle of the fourteenth century. Similar instances could be multiplied. The book is indispensable to every serious student of the history of the German language.

In conclusion, it may not be out of place to refer to the other great activity of Fischer's later life, namely his presidency of the *Litterarischer Verein* of Stuttgart, in which, also, he was Keller's successor. More than one hundred rare and important volumes were reprinted under Fischer's supervision, including Hans Sachs, Georg Wickram, the pre-Lutheran Bible, and Hugo von Trimberg. At the close of the war the invested funds of the society had shrunk to such an extent that further publication was practically impossible, and it was regretfully decided to liquidate its affairs. Volume 266, issued in July, 1915, thus forms the end of a long and important series.

W. K.

Dufresny, Charles. *Amusemens sérieux et comiques*. Introduction et notes de Jean Vic. Paris, Editions Bossard, 1921. 215 pp. 12 francs. [Collection des chefs-d'œuvre méconnus.] This careful reprint, on good paper, with a scholarly introduction should be welcome to students of the French novel. It groups conveniently the still too scanty facts known about Charles Dufresny (1648-1724) amiable trifler, and *amuseur* of Louis XIV, but a friend of Regnard, whose *Le Joueur* Dufresny is said to have suggested, editor for a while of *Le Mercure Galant* and author of a number of comedies which are not all forgotten. The editor, who has previously published the results of his study of Dufresny in the *Revue du dix-huitième siècle* (1916-1917) has also brought to light a forgotten playlet of Dufresny's, *Les Dominos*, which was produced at the Odéon in 1917 and published the same year by Hachette. However, Dufresny's chief title to attention is his *chef-d'œuvre méconnu*, the *Amusemens sérieux et comiques*, first published in 1699 and immediately successful. M. Vic prints the hitherto unknown final text of 1707, adding the variants from the first edition.

Dufresny names La Rochefoucauld and Pascal as his masters, Beaumarchais borrowed some traits for his Figaro and his Fanchette from his plays. As to the influence of the *Amusemens* on Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, pointed out already by Voltaire, M. Vic shows that this may well be explained by the common use of Giovanni Marana's *l'Espion du Grand Seigneur*. A curious point is that Balzac apparently borrowed an episode from the *Amusemens* for *La Paix du ménage* (1830). J. E. G.

Comedias de Lope de Vega, t. I, ed. y notas de J. Gómez Ocerín y R. M. Tenreiro (Madrid, *La Lectura*, 1920. 225 págs.). Mucha falta estaba haciendo una edición esmerada y al mismo tiempo manejable de las obras dramáticas del Fénix, que por inexplicables razones no había sido hasta ahora incluido en la colección de "Clásicos castellanos."

El remedio en la desdicha y *El mejor alcalde, el Rey* son las comedias elegidas por los Sres. Ocerín y Tenreiro para este primer tomo. Ahí van algunas observaciones acerca de las notas intercaladas en el texto.

En la correspondiente al verso 328 de *El remedio en la desdicha* han debido citarse otras obras en que el autor explota el mismo tema de la caída de los Abencerrajes. Sobre la 1057: no había necesidad de recurrir al *Dicc. de Autoridades* porque la frase es corriente. El verso 1936 es indudablemente muy malo, pero consta si hacemos una sinalefa forzada. Lo mismo sucede en el 2750 (*¿Qué te ha enviado? Aquel papel.*), donde *aquel* ha sido sustituido por *el* innecesariamente, ya que el verso puede leerse como octosílabo, haciendo diptongo en *enviado*. De no admitir tal diptongo tampoco constaría el verso 85. El giro empleado en el 1396, aunque no empaña la claridad del concepto, no es común hoy; pide nota. Tampoco vendría mal una breve explicación al 1447.

En las octavas con que comienza el acto tercero de *El remedio en la desdicha*, tal vez por haberlas escrito en esdrújulo, usa Lope varios vocablos que a mi juicio deben llevar nota a causa de su raro empleo (*mágica*, *belífero* y otros). *Africa* no consueña con *trágica* y *mágica*, ni *estériles* con *débiles* y *flébiles*. Puesto que en otros lugares se anotan los defectos de rima, también deben anotarse aquí.

Ultima observación. Teniendo en cuenta que los volúmenes de *La Lectura* van dirigidos a todos los interesados en el estudio de nuestra literatura clásica, sean o no eruditos, creo que faltan algunas noticias aclaratorias acerca de ciertos personajes mitológicos que no pueden ser familiares sino a los muy versados en la materia.

Tan leves como éstos son los reparos que pueden ponerse a las acertadas notas de *El mejor alcalde, el Rey*. J. R.